

Get Them To Care About Your Message

Getting your audience to care about what you have to say is critically important for anyone who wants to inform, motivate or influence people. That pretty much means everyone.

Over my 20 years as a professional performer and workshop presenter trying to figure out how to get my audiences to care about my message has fascinated me. This article highlights my personal thoughts and observations. While not grounded in empirical science, it does provide a street level perspective from the trenches.

The 4 Steps of Caring – From Indifference To Caring

Here are the four steps that a person goes through as they move from a mindset of indifference to that of caring. Our role as communicators is to guide our audience along this journey and make it as easy as possible.

Step 1 – Awareness

- Learning about information, point of view (POV) or perspective
- Person is informed or educated or discovers information

Step 2 – Comprehension

- Understand and appreciate the ramifications and consequences
- Rational and logical – person can appreciate your POV or perspective

Step 3 – Emotional Connection

- Person emotionally relates to your POV or perspective – can feel it.

Step 4 – Action

- Emotional commitment to take action mental and/or physical
- Mental – Mind share, support, encouragement
- Physical – behavior, participation, involvement

The 3 Big Mistakes

Here are the 3 most common mistakes that I have observed and experienced.

1. Expect or assume people will care.

Unrealistic expectations or assumptions are always an obstacle to effective communication. We have a tendency to think that our colleagues, friends and family will automatically care about something because we do. Expecting someone to immediately start off at Step 3 or 4 is unfair to everyone - your audience and yourself.

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Equally as important, these false expectations and assumptions hamper our personal communication effectiveness. If we think someone will automatically care we don't put the necessary energy into Steps 1 and 2. We don't organize our thoughts and message accordingly and essentially we don't provide the big picture. It's like starting to watch a movie from the middle instead of the beginning. Without the context it's hard to understand and appreciate what's happening.

Take Away – Don't expect or assume that people will care. Guide them through all four steps so they have the necessary information to care.

2. Don't provide enough reason/motivation for people to care.

In our minds we know why they should care but often we don't successfully articulate and express this information. When people can't connect the dots from the information we present we get frustrated and disappointed. We have stranded them in Step 2 by not providing them enough of the facts. We think they don't care but they're still trying to figure out why they should care.

For maximum impact, your information should clearly convey each of these criteria:

- Relevant – people can easily see why it is timely and important
- Meaningful – people can easily see how it impacts or affects them
- Proximity – people can easily see that it is 'close to home' and affects them personally

Take Away – Give your audience the information they need so they can realize that they need to care.

3. Our own personal conviction is unclear.

Sales trainers always say that the first sale is to yourself. That you have to believe in your product before you can get someone else to believe in it. I would add that it is really about personal conviction. It's hard to get someone to care about something if you don't. I like to think of it as the conviction boomerang. You get back what you put out. That's why it's so important to truly understand why you care about an issue or matter.

My point here is that we often try to convince people to care about something when we don't fully understand or appreciate why we care about it ourselves. How can we possibly be influential and persuasive when we can't articulate and express why we care?

The end result is that we 'push' caring on people by telling them they 'should' care. It's the difference between being told to do something or being asked to do it. A better and more effective approach is to invite people to care and to gently 'pull' them through the 4 Step of Caring. Hard to do if you don't understand yourself why you care.

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Here are some key questions you can ask yourself to help identify and understand your conviction.

What do I want someone to care about?

- Clearly define and articulate this information.

Why do I care about this?

- Clearly define and understand your motivation and emotional commitment.

Why should someone else care about this?

- What information will help motivate and pull them through the Four Steps of Caring?

Take Away – You have to understand why you care about something before you can get some one else to.



About Anthony Lindan

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